



Our Co-operative  
Advantage

# Co - operative Federation of Victoria Ltd

21 August 2003

The Hon. Alexander Downer MP  
Minister for Foreign Affairs  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Mr. Downer:

I write to express concern on the proposed cuts to the FAO 2004-2005 budget for the Major Programme 2.5.3 in particular those that will impact on the technical assistance provided by the Rural Development Commission for farmers' organisations and co-operatives.

It is understood that with limited resources the FAO has to establish priorities. In identifying these priorities, however, the FAO should recognise the crucial importance of its technical expertise and support in enhancing self-help and the entrepreneurial skills and decisions of farmers' organisations and co-operatives.

The first opportunity for Australia to formally intervene for farmers' organisations and co-operatives will be at the Joint FAO Programme and Finance Committees meeting, 19-25 September 2003. The meeting will discuss the proposed FAO budget for 2004-2005 and budget cuts

I have enclosed two documents of the International Co-operative Alliance supporting the importance of the FAO work with farmers' organisations and co-operatives – a statement to and a press release about a meeting with the FAO Council on 24 June 2003.

Yours in co-operation,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Griffiths".

David Griffiths  
Secretary